

MEETING MINUTES

Town of Acton Community Preservation Committee

October 1, 2009
Acton Town Hall, Room 204

Attending: Walter Foster, Roland Bourdon, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Mike Gowing, Jon Benson, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Tory Beyer, Corrina Roman-Kreuze, Janet Adachi and Roland Bartl, Town Planner. Also present was Steve Noone (Fin Com Observer).

Chairman Jon Benson called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

I. Public Information Hearing on 2010 Application Process.

A. Introduction. Jon provided an overview of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and the Committee's decision-making process, including the sources of CPA funds, the purposes for which CPA funding is available; the adverse impact of the Seideman decision on CPA funding for recreational purposes; the pending SB 90 legislation that would amend the CPA, including the provisions on recreational use; and the Committee deliberations about proposals and recommendations for Town Meeting approval.

B. Discussion.

1. Town Projects. Dean Charter, Town of Acton Municipal Properties Director, advised the Committee of three projects for which the Town is likely to seek CPA funding:

- a. Windsor Building – Restoration and Adaptive Use. Cost: \$300,000 – 600,000. The Town submitted the same proposal in 2008, but the Committee did not recommend funding for the project, citing the lack of a formal space-needs study by the Town. Mr. Charter said that the Board of Selectmen subsequently agreed to fund a space-needs study, but the funding did not materialize; Mr. Charter instead worked with Mike and others to survey existing space-use. The West Acton Citizens Library, the Memorial Library and the Historic District Commission have submitted letters in support of the project. The Town will be requesting the same amount of funding--\$300,000—as in 2008 for exterior work and restoration of the first floor to serve as a meeting space; in the future, the Town would like to restore the second floor and make it handicapped-accessible. The cost of doing both projects at the same time would be \$600,000, whereas doing them separately would add about \$50,000 to the aggregate cost.

Ken said that restoring the building would have to serve a clearly defined need and make sense for the Town. Mr. Charter that there are 1,200 – 1,500 Town board meetings every year, and Memorial Library has more than 600 room bookings per

year. Mr. Charter added that the West Acton neighborhood would like to have Town building space that could be rented out for neighborhood functions.

Walter asked about efforts to pursue other sources of funding, such as Town funding, historical grants and preservation grants; noting that the most successful proposals tend to be those that have leveraged funding. Mr. Charter said that much of the leveraging with respect to Town property is in the form of employee in-kind services, as was the case with the West Acton Citizens Library project.

Jon asked about other meeting-space options, for example, the schools or the public safety building. Mr. Charter said that the upper level of the public safety building is a secure area, limited to fire and police operations, so is not feasible as a public meeting space. The schools are unable to commit space for regularly scheduled Town board meetings. Tory added that the grammar schools charge fees for the use of school space because the schools must pay employees to remain on-site to lock up the buildings after the meetings end.

- b. Town Hall Windows. Cost: \$100,000. The windows in the historic portion date to 1864; they are drafty, do not work well, and have 40-year-old triple-track storm windows. The CPA project would encompass only the historic portion and not the portion added around 1985. The project would involve the restoration of the historic windows, and the addition of historically accurate wood storm windows. The project would cost about \$100,000 and could be done in two parts; the work on the ground floor would be less expensive because the windows are smaller and would require less labor.

Tory asked whether the business that did the West Acton Library project also would work on Town Hall. Mr. Charter explained that the project would require a public bid and at least three quotations, of which the Town must select the “cheapest qualified” bid. Heartwood Windows did the West Acton Library windows.

Roland suggested that the proposal include the cost-savings of doing all of the windows at once.

- c. 468 Main Street Windows. Cost: \$10,000. Town personnel will be moving into the building. But the second-floor casement windows, which replaced the original double-hung windows, are in bad shape, in addition to being historically inaccurate. The project would involve the replacement of the second-floor windows with historically accurate windows, and also restoring the windows flanking the front door.

- 2. Other Projects. Steve Noone asked whether Morrison Farm would be submitting a proposal; the consultant will be appearing before the Board of Selectmen (BOS).

II. Approval of 9/17/2009 Minutes. The minutes of 9/17/2009 were approved as amended.

III. Legislative Update: SB 90. Susan attended and reported on the September 29, 2009 hearing of the Committee on Development and Small Business. Proponents now are touting the proposed amendment as an economic stimulus plan that will create more jobs, etc. A very small increase in fees at the Registry of Deeds supposedly would be sufficient to cover the proposed 75% minimum state match. The only mention of the Seideman decision was in connection with the opposition of the League of Women Voters (LWV), which says that the proposed language is so broad that it would allow use of CPA funds for maintenance, which the CPA currently prohibits. If the Committee were interested, Stuart Saginor of the Community Preservation Coalition would be available to address the Committee about SB 90.

IV. Other Business.

- A. BOS Oversight Meeting. The oversight meeting is on Monday, November 2, 2009, 8:00 p.m. Committee members are encouraged to attend.
- B. Next Meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 22, 2009, but could be cancelled if the Committee has no pressing business to discuss. The next meeting thereafter is scheduled for Thursday, November 12. If the October 22 meeting is cancelled, the Committee will begin consideration of the 2010 applications at the November 12 meeting.

Bill mentioned that the “dollhouse” located at 60 Powder Mill Road might require discussion at some point. The owner has a demolition permit but the demolition is on hold until December.

Corrina said that the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) might have a potential project for discussion.

- C. 2010 Application Review Schedule. Applications for 2010 CPA funds are due on or before Monday, November 9, 2009, 5:00 p.m. The applications packets will be ready for Committee members to pick up on Tuesday, November 10 and review prior to the November 12 meeting. The applications also will be available for review on the Town website.
- D. Piper Lane Heating and Other Costs; Frontage. Committee members agreed to follow Town Counsel’s guidance, and authorize the Town’s use of funds from the Piper Lane appropriation, in a limited amount and for a limited time, to “preserve” the property. Susan reported that about \$50,000 remains of the original appropriation for the purchase and related expenses.

Motion by Walter:

To authorize the Town to spend up to \$2,000 for utility services out of the funds allocated at Town Meeting for the acquisition of the Piper Lane property, to protect the house from injury, harm or destruction during the 2009-2010 winter season.
Seconded; approved (one Nay).

Committee members again discussed the frontage issue, and the options for resolving it, including the option of selling a single, six-acre lot with the house, subject to a conservation restriction that the Town would hold; members expressed a range of opinions as to how the rights that the Town would retain under the six-acre-conservation-restriction option would compare to what the Town would have under the original arrangement approved at Town Meeting.

E. Acton Housing Authority (AHA) Issues/Updates.

1. AHA Access to CPA Funds. Ken said that the AHA would like to be able to draw appropriated CPA funds directly from an account, rather than go through the cumbersome process of having to spend its own funds up front, and then request CPA funds in reimbursement. Roland Bartl noted that the ACHC has access to its CPA funding up front.
2. Piper Lane. The AHA has received a suggestion that Piper Lane property be an affordable housing unit, which raises a number of issues, including the need for funding.
3. Sachem Way. The AHA has selected the consultant and is in the process of selecting the architect from among 21 proposals. The AHA is aiming to secure state funds before applying for additional CPA funding; the alternative would be to secure the CPA funding first, which could be helpful in persuading the state to provide funding.

Next Meeting. The next meeting will be either Thursday, October 22, 2009, 7:30 p.m. or, if that meeting is cancelled, Thursday, November 12, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

- Janet Adachi, Clerk